

Session 7: Matthew 5:9

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God has placed us in specific places and around specific people so that we can bring peace into our broken world.

Head Change: To know that every Christian is called to be a peacemaker in the domains God has placed us.

Heart Change: To feel a deep desire to bring peace wherever we see the brokenness of sin.

Life Change: To proactively look for ways to establish God's peace in the areas where he has placed us.

OPEN

Have you ever felt a deep sense of peace? What was that like?

We tend to think of peace as a quiet afternoon, a calm feeling, or an absence of conflict. But Jesus's idea of peace is much deeper than we might think. It is not just the absence of violence and conflict, but a deep harmony throughout all creation. In this session, Matt will show us the Bible's view of peace and our call to create flourishing in the world around us.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Continue to memorize the Beatitudes with your group.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What words did Matt use to help us understand biblical peace?

Why does peacemaking feel too big for us?

What is the most peacemaking activity we can do?

Show Session 7: *Matthew 5:9* (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

We live in an angry, anxious, and disoriented world where peace seems not just elusive, but downright unattainable. But it is precisely to this world, and God's people, that Jesus speaks these words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." **To what extent does peace seem far-off or impossible to you? Why does it feel so unattainable?**

The Beatitudes show how God designed humanity to function and flourish. And the idea of flourishing is central to the concept of peace or *shalom*. Matt used words like harmony, wholeness, and rhythm to describe God's vision of peace, comparing it to a well-tuned orchestra. **In what ways is this idea of *shalom*, of harmony and flourishing, different from our ideas of peace?**

What might harmony and flourishing look like in our world today?

*[Note: For a deeper dive on the biblical concept of shalom, see **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this session.]*

Peace is not just a seemingly impossible task—it's hard work that requires long-term commitment and wisdom. But it is the work God calls us, his sons and daughters, to apply ourselves to. **What things tend to keep us from working to create peace? What are some of the barriers that you personally encounter when trying to make peace at work? With your family? With your neighbors? How could you overcome those barriers?**

*[Note: To see how the Bible connects peace and wisdom, see **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this session.]*

Since the task of peacemaking seems so big, we might feel overwhelmed by it. But we don't have to figure out all the strife in the world; we just need to faithfully use our gifts in our spheres of influence. A key thing to remember is that God has made you with unique gifts for the work of peacemaking. **In what ways has God uniquely wired you? How could you use your gifts and abilities to make peace?**

Who could you partner with to hold you accountable for the work of peacemaking?

God has also placed you where you live, at the time in which you live for a specific purpose. Read Acts 17:26–27.

In this passage, Paul says that God determined the “appointed times and boundaries” of where people live so that those around us might “seek and find God.” **Who are the people around you who don’t yet know God? What opportunities do you have to get to know and serve them?**

How could building a relationship with your neighbors create a better neighborhood for your family and theirs?

Your gifts and personality were planned by God so that you could bring peace and flourishing into the world.

What specific opportunities do you have in your neighborhood, at your job, and in your extracurricular activities to make peace? What is the next step you need to take to serve God with that opportunity?

Take a moment to dream big. **What would it look like if your city was rooted in the peace of God—flourishing and in harmony? In what small way can you contribute to that big dream? Who could you partner with to make peace where you live?**

LAST WORD

In a world filled with disorder and division, the *shalom* of God feels impossible, far out of reach. But you have been uniquely wired and uniquely placed to bring peace into the world. God is simply calling you to live faithfully right where you are. You can’t solve world peace, but you can start to create it on your block.

So, get to know your neighbors and serve them when opportunities arise. Seek forgiveness and to restore broken relationships in your family. Be kind and encouraging to the people you encounter every day. Pray for your enemies. Carry the *shalom* of God with you everywhere you go.

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where the following segment could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use this section as a short devotional to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider reading this section to deepen your study of the Beatitudes.

1. *Shalom*

The biblical concept of peace is best captured by the Hebrew word *shalom*. It describes more than a quiet day on the beach or a lack of stress and anxiety. It is more than the absence of conflict; it's an all-encompassing harmony and wholeness in the world that leads to the flourishing of all people. *Shalom* is the world restored, full of joy, laughter, celebration, and love.

When you compare the world's idea of peace with that of the Bible, in what ways is the Bible's vision of peace more appealing?

In the Bible, *shalom* is used to describe the well-being of people (Gen 43:27; Exod 4:18), harmony between groups of people (1 Kgs 5:12), physical well-being (Gen 37:14), right relationship with God (Job 22:21), safety and security (Gen 28:21; Isa 52:7), prosperity (Prov 3:2), satisfaction (Exod 18:23), and to flourishing (Ps 72:7). **How do the terms "prosperity," "satisfaction," and "flourishing" communicate a better and deeper vision of peace than a mere "lack of conflict"?**

In a world that is angry and anxious, how might the concept of *shalom* be appealing to our society?

As peacemakers, Christians have been called to establish the peace of God wherever we go. **Where around you is *shalom* absent? How can you establish *shalom* in that place, for that person, or in that situation?**

Making peace is an act that God blesses, but it isn't always easy and it's not always clear how we make peace. But we don't have to figure it out by ourselves. God wants us to be wise so that we can know what to do in every situation.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you weren't sure how to resolve a dilemma peacefully? What happened? Why was it so difficult to make peace?

Since wisdom is so crucial to peacemaking, it begs the question: how do we grow in wisdom? One way is simply through age and experience. But Scripture gives us an additional path as well—by asking God. **How might a lack of wisdom undermine, or even sabotage, a situation like the one you just discussed? How might having more wisdom help you in the future?**

Read James 1:5

This verse shows us that any of us can be wise. We only need to ask God and he will give us the wisdom we desperately need. **When you find yourself in a position to make peace, how can you proactively remind yourself to ask God to give you wisdom for the task?**

God will sometimes show us the way we should go, but he also teaches us wisdom through experience, learning from the experience of others, and the wise counsel of other Christians. **What are some ways that you can actively cultivate wisdom?**

If we aspire to be peacemakers, as Jesus calls us to be, may we commit ourselves to ask God to supply us with the wisdom that we need, for he “gives to all generously and ungrudgingly.” **Take a moment to pray and ask God for wisdom right now. How could you remind yourself to earnestly seek wisdom throughout your day?**